



from the Office of Human Resources



July 2002

**OHR Acting
Director and Team
Leaders**

Congratulations to James E. Torgesen, Labor/Employee Relations Manager, who has been named Acting Director of Human Resources while recruitment is underway for a new OHR director. Also, to Georgia Coffey, Acting EEO and Diversity Manager, and Carlos Vargas, Acting Manager of the Staffing and Organizational Development Team.

**Award for OHR's
Resource Library**

Congratulations also to three OHR employees – Lori Plazinski, Adam Santo, and Kerming Tsaor, who recently received the Local Government Personnel Association's "Best and Brightest" HR Technical Support Award for their creation of OHR's on-line Resource Library.

The Resource Library continues to grow and improve and now includes most of OHR's commonly used forms, references, and program information. In addition, you'll find information on group insurance; retirement; deferred compensation; training (training calendar and tuition assistance), classification and compensation (salary schedules, classification plan, position description form); EEO and diversity (EEO complaint process, mediation program, Action Plans, Diversity Council information, and links to related resources); performance management; *Personnel Regulations*, collective bargaining agreements, and much, much more. If you haven't yet visited, please check it out. What you find there could save you a phone call or a trip to OHR offices. Throughout this newsletter you'll see many references to the Resource Library. Here are the addresses to use to access information referred to:

On the County's intranet, go to **<http://portal.mcgov.org>**. Click on Human Resources, then Resource Library, then look for the specific information you need.

On the Internet, go to **http://www.emontgomery.org/ohr/index_frameset.htm**. Click on Resource Library, then look for the specific information you need.



Office of Human Resources - 101 Monroe St., 7th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850 –
240-777-5000/TTY 240-777-5126 E-mail: OHR@co.mo.md.us - Internet: <http://www.co.mo.md.us>

General Wage Adjustment in Paychecks of August 9

Most unrepresented employees will receive a general wage adjustment of 3.5% effective July 14, 2002. Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements will receive the adjustments negotiated through the collective bargaining process. MLS performance-based pay is also effective July 14. Look for the general wage adjustment and performance-based pay in paychecks of August 9th.

New EEO & Diversity Training

OHR's EEO and Diversity Management Team has developed a new training course, *EEO Compliance Training for Managers and Supervisors*. This course provides critical information that all supervisors should be aware of in order to maintain a discrimination-free workplace and avoid costly liability. OHR's Training Team is coordinating the scheduling of departments for this course, as well as for the *Maintaining a Safe Work Environment* course. These are **mandatory** training courses for all supervisors and managers. If you are a supervisor or manager and have not been scheduled for these courses, please contact your departmental training coordinator or OHR's Training Team for information on scheduling.

We are also offering a new Diversity Studies Program in the training curriculum for employees and managers. The program offers certificates for individuals who complete a total of four EEO and diversity related training courses under the non-supervisory track, or six such courses under the supervisory/managerial track within a three year period. For more information, please visit the Resource Library.

8th Annual Diversity Celebration Program

OHR and the Montgomery County Diversity Council will hold the County's 8th Annual Diversity Celebration Program on October 17, 2002. This year's theme is *Diversity: Facts Behind the Faces*. The program will run from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Executive Office Building auditorium and cafeteria. The morning program will feature a keynote speaker, awards, and an inspirational musical performance by the Montgomery County Police Gospel Choir. The afternoon program will feature international food selections and a diverse array of live entertainment. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this celebration of diversity in Montgomery County!

Mediation: An Alternative Solution

Disputes in the workplace are inevitable. Traditionally, the means of resolving employment disputes has been complaint investigation or grievance processing. The EEO and Diversity Management Team and Labor/Relations Team offer an innovative and effective alternative to these time consuming processes -- **mediation**. Mediation is an informal, voluntary process that provides a safe, non-adversarial forum for the parties to a complaint to discuss their issues and work out a mutually agreeable solution. The process is confidential and voluntary to all parties; there is no obligation to participate or to reach an agreement. If either party chooses not to participate or the mediation fails to settle the complaint, the complaint will be investigated and processed in the normal fashion. The failure to

Mediation
(continued)

successfully mediate a complaint will in no way affect the investigation, and the information shared during the mediation will not be used in the investigation.

For more information on mediation, please contact the EEO and Diversity Management Team at (240) 777-5016 or the Labor/Employee Relations Team at (240) 777-5114.

Length of Service Celebration

On June 19, County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Romer, and County Councilmember Blair Ewing hosted hundreds of County employees and guests at a ceremony recognizing employees who completed at least twenty years of service during 2001 and 2002. At the ceremony, held at the University of Maryland Shady Grove campus, honorees were given certificates signed by the County Executive and lapel pins reflecting years of service. Employees with five, ten, or 15 years of County service will be recognized by their respective departments on separate occasions.

MLS Evaluation Survey

As part of the five-year Management Leadership Service (MLS) Evaluation Plan to assess how well the MLS is meeting its goals and objectives, MLS members were asked by Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Romer to share their experiences and assessment of the MLS in a web-based survey. The consolidated responses of survey participants will be used to evaluate and refine the MLS. In addition to responding to the survey, MLS members will have periodic opportunities to provide feedback on the MLS through focus groups and audits.

Recognizing Montgomery's Best

County managers and employees may now nominate County merit-system employees, volunteers, County residents, and members of private organizations for this year's Montgomery's Best Honor Awards. These prestigious and competitive awards recognize exceptional efforts to support the County's guiding principles and programs. Seven categories of Honor Awards will be recognized at the 3rd annual ceremony hosted by the County Executive and the Chief Administrative Officer. Honor Awards information is available in OHR's Resource Library. Nominations must be submitted through your department for concurrence, so check to see if your department has an internal nomination process. Final nominations from departments are due to OHR by October 1, 2002.

Leadership Experiential Program (LEP)

To improve flexibility in the assignment of County managers and to enhance managers' occupational mobility, the Leadership Experiential Program will offer Leadership Institute graduates short-term interdepartmental experiential opportunities to enhance specific leadership competencies. LEP is a web-based announcement/request process located on OHR's intranet site at: <http://portal.mcgov.org>. Click on Human Resources, then LEP on the left side of OHR's home

LEP (continued)

page. Check out this address for department postings of LEP opportunities. The long-term expectation is that a working exposure in other departments will help to eliminate barriers that traditionally have impeded the movement of employees across departmental lines.

OHR Wins National Association of Counties Award

The Office of Human Resources is the recipient of a 2002 NACo Achievement Award for its Leadership Institute, the principal educational program for participants in the County's Management Leadership Service (MLS). NACo Achievement Awards are granted annually to innovative county programs that "contribute to and enhance county government in the United States."

FY 03 Tuition Assistance Increase

Thinking of going back to school in the fall? If you want to start or complete a college degree, take computer classes, improve the skills you need in your current job, or prepare for higher level responsibilities, tuition assistance can help. Most full time employees may apply for up to **\$1,030** during this fiscal year; part time employees may apply for up to **\$515**. Look for the tuition assistance application form in OHR and also in the Resource Library. Select HR Management /Training/Career Development, and look for Tuition Assistance.

Update on Requests to Transfer State Retirement Service

In 2001, the County Council provided an opportunity for active members of the Employees' Retirement System who were eligible at any time to transfer service credits from any public retirement system in the State, but did not do so in a timely manner, to request to transfer all applicable credits to the County retirement system, subject to all applicable requirements of State law. The deadline for such requests to be received by the Office of Human Resources was December 31, 2001.

OHR received several hundred inquiries regarding this opportunity and is now beginning to request the information needed for each request to determine transfer eligibility and the amount of benefit offset from the State. The reason for the delay was that there was a change in State law as to how counties such as Montgomery County would calculate a benefit offset in cases where the transfer of retirement service involved a non-contributory plan. We have now determined, with the help of our actuaries, what information we must obtain from an employee's former retirement system to calculate this offset and have programmed our internal systems to do the calculation.

As we collect and process this information, we will be contacting all members who submitted a request by the deadline. Should such a member plan to retire prior to receiving that information, our office will work with the former retirement system to expedite transfer processing.

Student Status Verification

Twice a year the County requests verification of student status for group insurance eligibility. If you have a dependent student aged 19-26, by the end of the month you should have received a letter from the Benefits Team requesting that you verify your dependent's full-time student status for the fall semester. When you receive it, please send us your documentation *along with the letter* (so we know who your dependent is). Be sure to keep a copy of what you send us for your records. Respond as requested by August 31, 2002 so that the student remains covered under your group insurance plan.

Group Insurance Transfer Season

It's still summer, but sooner than you think, it will be that time again – Group Insurance Transfer Season. Transfer Season for changes effective January 1, 2003 will be held this year from October 21 through November 12, 2002. Look for information to be mailed to your home address in October. Please read the materials carefully and keep them for reference during the coming year.

Outlook Training

Between May and September the computers of over 6000 employees will be converted from Memo for Windows to Outlook 2002, the County's new e-messaging system. OHR has scheduled large group briefings to train employees on the basic features of Outlook's messaging and calendar features. The training dates and locations are posted in the OHR Resource Library. Be sure to sign up!

The bulletin and related training handouts are also available at the DTS e-messaging site,
<http://portal.mcgov.org/emessaging/training>.

Performance Management

Beginning July 1, 2001, Montgomery County renewed its focus on performance planning and career development by implementing a new performance management system. Under this system, both employees and supervisors have critical roles in ensuring the successful implementation of this management tool. Performance management is an opportunity for managers and employees to:

- Set goals. The first phase of performance management is to set challenging but achievable performance goals or expectations. As employees, we should all take advantage of the opportunity to review workload, identify the resources available to achieve desired results, and develop and/or refine the strategies used to meet objectives.
- Ask questions and raise issues. Your ideas and suggestions about how performance management can improve efficiency and productivity will help make the performance management process useful and worthwhile.
- Take control of your career. A major aspect of performance management is matching employees' career goals with the appropriate learning opportunities. Each employee will be

Performance Management (continued)

asked to identify a career development/enhancement goal on the performance plan. Remember, county-sponsored courses, tuition assistance, self-paced learning opportunities, and special projects can help enhance your learning opportunities and enrich your career experience.

By now, most employees have had the opportunity to discuss the performance management system with their supervisors and colleagues. Additional resources are available to managers and employees to help answer questions about the County's performance management systems:

- Labor unions/collective bargaining units. Union staff and shop stewards will provide advice and counsel to employees on a wide range of issues, including their rights and responsibilities under the performance management provisions of their respective contracts.
- OHR staff on both the Training and Organizational Development Team and the Labor/Employee Relations Team are available to offer information and technical assistance to employees and supervisors in performance management. Copies of performance management policies and forms, as well as additional helpful resources, are available in the Resource Library.

Blood Drive August 14

Blood donations are always needed. Please help. Donations will be accepted on Wednesday, August 14, in the EOB lobby auditorium, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Call 1-800-448-3543 to schedule an appointment. Thank you.

Future Newsletter Distribution

This and all future issues of *f.y.i.* will be posted in the Resource Library. Because of budget constraints, it is our intent to greatly reduce the number of paper copies of the newsletter in the future. We will continue to post the *f.y.i.* in the Resource Library and will use more automated methods of distribution, to the extent possible.

f.y.i. is published occasionally by the Office of Human Resources. Comments and suggestions are welcome. This information can be made available in an alternate format, if necessary. Contact pat.daly@co.mo.md.us.

Tear off and save:

How to Get to the Resource Library

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